

# MEMORANDUM

TO: Mayor Bellamy and City Council

DATE: 5-14-08

VIA: Gary Jackson, City Manager

FROM: Sasha Vrtunski, AICP

SUBJECT: Update on Downtown Master Plan process

*May 8 Public Meeting*

Last week, the Kick Off meeting for the Master Plan was held at the Asheville Civic Center was held. As you have heard, there was a large crowd of at least 350 folks. There was a diverse group of folks. From the show of hands, it appeared that approximately 1/3 of the attendees lived in Downtown Asheville, 1/3 lived in the city of Asheville, and 1/3 lived outside of the city.

### *Advisory Committee*

The Advisory Committee met May 9 after the large public meeting on May 8. There was unanimous agreement among the committee that the turnout was great from many sectors of the community, but certain parts of the community were not present. To that end, it was decided to make specific outreach efforts to the African-American community, the development community and more conservative folks in the community.

The Advisory Committee also talked about making sure that the Downtown Master Plan process was portrayed accurately in the press. The Asheville Citizen-Times article on that morning had a headline that emphasized a small demonstration that occurred before the meeting, although the majority of the article was dedicated to the meeting and its content. Members were distressed that we had a large community meeting, and it wasn't clear from the article what had happened.

Lastly, as you know, the Downtown Commission and the Advisory Committee both hope that City Council will participate as much as possible in the process, which will also help with the public participation and faith in the process.

### Outreach

We are continuing outreach to the general public as well as to the groups outlined above. We are emphasizing participation in the May 30 and May 31 events as the most important to the formulation of the plan. We have partnered with the Asheville Citizen-Times on a survey for the Downtown Master Plan so that folks who can't come to meetings, or perhaps are visitors can register their opinions. You can find this survey at [www.citizen-times.com/opinion](http://www.citizen-times.com/opinion).

We anticipate receiving all the notes from the May 8 session by Thursday, May 15 and will be posting them on the city website for the public. We have also created a MySpace page, which you can access at [www.myspace.com/ashevilledtmasterplan](http://www.myspace.com/ashevilledtmasterplan).

Please let me know if I can answer any questions or concerns that you may have.

## **Schedule of Public Meetings**

### **Local Panel & Discussion:**

*"History of Downtown Asheville: Understanding the Context"*

Thursday, May 15 7:00 – 8:30 pm

Public Works Bldg, 161 S. Charlotte Street

*Come hear local downtown experts and learn about the history of our downtown, leading up to the present time.*

### **Community Educational Session: *Current Issues in Downtown Development***

Friday, May 30 6:00 – 8:00 pm

Asheville Community Theater

*This session will be an important opportunity to explore specific urban issues such as design and affordability.*

### **Downtown Master Plan Workshop**

Saturday, May 31

10:00 am – 3:00 pm

Location: To Be Announced

*This workshop will be an exciting day of brainstorming in small interactive groups; directed toward creating a vision for downtown. This is your opportunity to roll up your sleeves and join with your community to suggest, test and evaluate what elements should define Downtown Asheville for the next 50 years. .*

### **Drop-In Session**

Sunday, June 1

12:00 pm – 3:00 pm

Office of Economic Development

29 Haywood Street

*An informal session that will further summarize and develop the vision emerging from the May 31<sup>st</sup> workshop. Open to all, whether or not you participated in the May 31<sup>st</sup> workshop.*

### **Community Feedback Session on Draft Vision and Goals**

Thursday, June 12

6:00 – 8:00 pm

Asheville Civic Center

*The planning team will bring draft vision and goals for community feedback. The vision and goals will be the basis for the Master Plan.*